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Keeping Fit in the Smog: Health, Self-Tracking and Air Pollution in Postsocialist China

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Abstract

This article concerns the relation between health, the embodied self-tracking subject and the environment in postsocialist China. Instead of simply expanding the framework of neoliberal subject to the question of health and the phenomenon of tracking and sharing data of "smog jog" in the Chinese context, this article addresses the following two inter-related questions: (1) how might an investigation of the practices of self-tracking "smog jog" in the context of postsocialist china afford a reconsideration of health; (2) how might an examination of the ways in which health is interpreted, performed and negotiated through practices of monitoring, measuring and recording a jog and the air quality in postsocialist China rework the conception of self-tracking. This article examines posts on Sina Weibo, which is one of the most popular social media platforms in China, in which Weibo users record and describe their jog in the smog. It argues that the configuration and performance of health and the embodied self-tracking subjects are multiple, and are informed by, negotiated with and find expressions in the environment in postsocialist China.

"Smog Jog"

In 2016 a photograph tweeted by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, which shows him jogging past the Tiananmen gate in Beijing on a smoggy day, went

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viral on social media. Zuckerberg's gleeful expression seems to suggest that he was not only undeterred by the thick grey haze, but was in good health and enjoying his jog. However, as many commentators and netizens have pointed out, at the time the photo was taken, air pollution in Beijing was reportedly fifteen times of safety level. Zuckerberg and his jogging companions were seen to ignore experts' recommendation of wearing air-filtering masks and avoiding outdoor exercise when pollution is high. Many netizens questioned whether this was another attempt to please the Chinese authorities and get Facebook into the Chinese market, where it is banned. Others shifted the attention to the question of censorship, suggesting that Zuckerberg had to bypass the firewall to access Twitter while he was in China. Still others criticized Zuckerberg for being politically insensitive by jogging on the ground where Chinese students fought democracy in 1989.

The "smog jog"—a term that is now most often associated with this photo—is part of Zuckerberg's "year of running challenge." His goal was to run 365 miles (587 kilometers) in 2016, and he shared photos that marked his jog in cities such as Berlin, Barcelona, Rome, Lagos, and Palo Alto. In the same year, he also started the Facebook group "A year of running," which has more than 120,000 members. Many members also uploaded photos as well as shared details such as the speed, duration, and distance of their jog. The smog jog photo, therefore, could be considered a form of self-tracking. In fact, recording and sharing data and images of the smog jog on social media have become a common practice among Chinese netizens in recent years. On Chinese social media platforms, such as Sina Weibo, many netizens share a diverse set of data, including the route, time, speed, distance of a jog, the air quality index score during the time of jogging, and photographs of themselves or the places they run past.

While an emerging body of research examines the phenomena of self-tracking, this field of scholarly work typically focuses on questions such as self-optimization and self-management, and the relation between digital data and embodied health. Less attention has been paid to the ways in which practices of recording and publishing images and data of a jog are always located in, shaped by, and, in turn, shape specific social, economic, political, and environmental configurations, as my discussion of Zuckerberg's photo makes visible. As Deborah Lupton (2017b) observes,

> Most research thus far…has focused on the members of privileged social groups located in the Global North who are tracking their health indicators because they are already conforming to the ideals of the

> responsibilised, self-managing and entrepreneurial citizen. We know little as yet about how the members of marginalised or stigmatised groups engage in self-tracking, resist it or even re-invent it. How are elderly people, people from minority ethnic or racial groups, people with poor literacy skills or people with disabilities engaging (or not) in self-tracking? How are people living outside the Global North using these technologies? (3)

I agree with Lupton on the need to decenter the conceptualization of self-tracking practices by attending to the specific context in which the practices are situated. However, my intention here is not simply to add to the field of research of the self-tracking experiences of the Other. Rather, I suggest that decentering entails reworking the parameters that define the concept of health and "healthy bodies." For example, despite different approaches to digitized health—some put emphasis on the regulatory and mediating force of the abstract and disembodied data (see, for example, Kenner 2015), others underscore the social and affective aspects of health data (see, for example, Maturo and Setiffi 2015)[1]—the analysis of health is typically grounded in the individual body, which functions as the basic unit of measurement. I suggest that it is important to rethink, rather than simply inserting new data into, the existing framework upon which questions concerning self and self-tracking are posed.

This article analyzes Chinese social media entries in which the "smog jog" is tracked and discussed. It does not begin with a notion of health as a property of a self-present individual body, that is separated from, although affected by, the environment. Instead, this article explores the materialization of health in, through, and as the intersectional relations of power felt as specific "human-atmospheric relations" (Choy 2012). Taking inspiration from Timothy Choy's (2012) theorization of air, I use the term "human-atmospheric relations" to refer to the ways in which air is sensed and made sense of through material-discursive practices such as "commentaries on the breeze, held breaths" (146), environmental politics, as well as forms of measurement. This article proceeds as follows. First, I provide a brief introduction of the practice of jogging and self-tracking against the backdrop of the sports boom, the issue of environmental pollution, as well as the role of social media in shaping the social and political landscape in China. Second, I explain the feminist materialist and intersectional approaches utilized in this article. Third, I elaborate on the methods for collecting and analyzing data. Fourth, I analyze a few posts that discuss and track jogging in smog on Weibo, one of the most popular Chinese social media platforms. Finally, I

conclude by laying bare my approach to self-tracking and health in the context of postsocialist China.

Jogging, Air Pollution, Self-tracking and Environmental Data Sharing on Social Media

While jogging has long been a part of the health routine in China, in recent years, it is becoming increasingly popular among the urban middle class. According to the China Athletic Association, there were 1,900 running races organized in China in 2019, which attracted a total of 7.2 million participants (*XinhauNet* 2019). New running tracks have been installed in many cities. For example, in Shanghai, in addition to newly built running tracks by the river and in parks, a smart running track equipped with a facial recognition system and heart rate monitors was put to use in 2017. Furthermore, practices such as joining a running club, participating in a race, sporting athletic gear from popular fitness brands, using fitness apps and wearing devices to track, measure a jog, and learn how to improve and optimize performance have become the new markers of privilege, since the postsocialist boom in luxury goods, education, and tourism, which differentiates the urban middle class from the others.

I use the term *postsocialist* to refer to "the circumstance under which China has largely embraced global market capitalism while the legacies of socialist values and practices remain palpable in many social and political domains" (Zhang 2017, 7). The postsocialist transitions are characterized by hybridity and ambivalences, and not the replacement of a pure socialist economic and value system by the all-encompassing market reform and neoliberal values and governance (Cooper 2011). Such a hybrid form is tellingly manifested in, for example, the postcollective era healthcare reforms that steadily erode the state welfare provision, on the one hand, and reinforce the figure of a healthy national body, whose interest should be served and defended by the individual citizens, on the other hand. And yet, despite the emphasis on self-responsibility as serving the common good, the past decades of postsocialist reforms saw increasing collective contestations against issues such as increased socioeconomic inequalities, unequal access to medical care, and the persistent problem of environmental pollution.

The development of Chinese social media platforms and the ways in which they shape the social and political landscape are especially important and interesting against this backdrop (see, for example, Deluca, Brunner, and Sun 2016). In 2019 there were over 882 million social media users in China, a sharp increase from 22.5

million users in 2000 (Statista 2020). Thanks to its affordance of instant information sharing, diverse forms of content—textual, visual, and audio—that can be generated and uploaded by users, and interpersonal communications and networks, social media platforms in China have become one of the most dynamic spaces in which netizens follow and share information that is different from, and sometimes even contradicts, information shared via mainstream media outlets. The "voting" on Weibo on implementing stricter air quality measurement standard is a good example. In 2011 Pan Shiyi, a Chinese real estate magnate and a prominent public figure, took notice of the disparities between the air quality index (AQI) tweeted by the American embassy in Beijing, which measured PM 2.5, and the air quality rating issued by the Chinese government, which excluded the measurement of PM 2.5. Pan launched an unofficial vote on Weibo and asked his millions of followers to vote whether Chinese authorities should adopt international standard for measuring air quality. This event is regarded as one of the catalysts for the changing air quality measurement practices in China. In February 2012 the measurement of PM 2.5 was officially included in the national ambient air quality standards in China. It is important to note, however, that although the problem of air pollution is no longer denied by the authorities, it remains a sensitive topic and is subject to censorship on social media.

In an attempt to reduce public resentment, which is seen to pose threat to social stability and economic development, the government initiated a new healthcare reform in 2009 and has continuously increased its investments in the health sector. For example, the "Healthy China" action plan launched under the leadership of Xi Jinping in 2016 puts emphasis on healthy lifestyle and physical fitness supported by technologically and scientifically innovative health services, such as smart cities, as well as an expanded health industry, which would become a linchpin of Chinese national economy (World Health Organization, n.d.). And yet, as Jiong Tu (2019) observes, despite the increased investment in the health sector, "people's average out-of-pocket expenditures in health care are continually rising" (18). Instead of returning to the public health system of the collective era, the new healthcare reform configures health as simultaneously the responsibility and capacity of the individual, and the defining feature of the fit—technologically advanced, economically prosperous, and socially stable—national body. Such a configuration not only produces new hierarchies based on differential access to, consumption of, and investment in health, but also puts the responsibility for individual and national fitness on the individual and delegitimizes and stigmatizes collective contestations of risk (such as

environmental and health risk) as threats to the health of the national body (see also Cooper 2011).

As the above discussions have shown, the phenomenon of tracking and discussing smog jog on Chinese social media is situated in the intersections of a few important issues such as healthcare reform, social and economic inequalities, environmental pollution, as well as the movements on and surveillance of social media. Instead of juxtaposing them, I approach them in terms of intersectional relations of power that are materialized in and negotiated by the jogging and self-tracking body. In the next section, I elaborate on the theoretical frameworks that I adopt for such an approach.

Feminist Materialist and Intersectional Approach

To analyze how these different forms of power relations intersect and shape the practices of self-tracking the smog jog on social media, I turn to a feminist intersectional approach. As Nina Lykke (2010) writes, "the consensus regarding the importance of intersectionality does not mean that feminist theorists are in agreement about how to define and approach the issue" (49). The limited space here does not permit a thorough engagement with feminist debates on intersectionality. However, I wish to clarify that in this article I draw on what Lykke (2010) calls "implicit feminist theorizings of intersectionality," which "focus on intersections, but without using the concept 'intersectionality' as the main frame of interpretation" (68).

Instead of beginning with and reproducing social categories of race, class, and gender, for example, as if the logics that govern their operation can be applied irrespective of the context, I use an implicit intersectional approach to examine how the concept of health is materialized and felt as "human-atmospheric relations" emerging in and through intersectional relations of power that concern issues such as the sports boom, the changing relation between the citizen and the state, environmental pollution, socioeconomic inequalities, as well as the role of social media platforms in China. Furthermore, this intersectional approach also takes into account human and nonhuman relations, such as the relation between the body, the air, the environment, and the numerical data provided by fitness apps, which, according to Lykke, remain the "missing piece" in feminist intersectionality analysis.

In an attempt to analyze the human and nonhuman relations materialized in the practices of jogging, breathing, and self-tracking in the social media posts, I also

draw on feminist materialist approaches that challenge the separation between the subject and the object, between the textual and the biological body. For example, in rethinking the body in terms of corporeography (Kirby 1997), Vicki Kirby (2011) suggests that it is "in the nature of corporeality to mathematize, represent, or intelligently take measure of itself" (63). Importantly, along these lines, the strict distinction installed between qualitative/cultural descriptions and quantitative/scientific measures of the body is called into question (see, for example, Liu 2018). Moreover, on this account, the body and the environment are not simply objects that are measured, but are "apparatuses of bodily production" (Haraway 1988, 591).

The feminist materialist theoretical framework that I utilize is in line with the sociomaterial approach to self-tracking developed by Lupton (2017b), which sheds light on the ways in which "digital devices are incorporated into our everyday routines, entangled with our sense of self, our experience of embodiment, our acquisition of knowledge and meaning making and our social relations" (37). Importantly, in underscoring contingent, embodied, and affective relationalities, the sociomaterial approach provides analytical affordance of ambiguities and negotiations that exceed an oppositional account that either emphasizes the determining and oppressive force of norms coded in the algorithms of the apps—"biopedagogical capacities" (Lupton 2018, 12), or the agency of the self-managing and self-optimizing subject (see also Ruckenstein and Schüll 2017). For example, in her study on food-tracking apps, Lupton (2018) observes the multiple and ambivalent affect and effect of using these apps. While some respondents feel that the apps provide important information and help them to feel better and being in control, others feel anxious and judged; still others experience frustration and disappointment as the apps do not deliver what they promised.

The possibility for examining the ambivalent and multiple experiences of self-tracking that the sociomaterial approach affords is particularly important for researching the smog jog in the postsocialist context. Performing outdoor exercise when air is polluted raises questions about how risks and health are understood and negotiated, and cannot be reduced to either the question of neoliberal subject or the issue of normative regulation of what counts as a healthy body. Moreover, as the opening discussions about Zuckerberg's photo show, who jogs, where, how the jog is measured, and how information is shared are questions that concern issues such as socioeconomic inequalities, internet surveillance, and competing local and global representations of China. The

feminist intersectional approach that I adopt affords an account of the intersectional relations of power that are sometimes elided in the sociomaterial approaches to self-tracking by virtue of its preoccupation with the assemblage that is analyzed "in an enumerative, all-encompassing fashion that dilutes its analytical power" (Ruckenstein and Schüll 2017, 230). In the next section, I explain the methods for data collection and analysis that are in line with the feminist materialist and intersectional approaches and that allow the exploration of the multiple ways in which health is understood, felt, performed, and negotiated through the self-tracking of smog jog.

Data Collection and Method

This article analyzes entries about smog jog on Sina Weibo, one of the most popular social media platforms in China. Since 2016 I have been occasionally following discussions on air pollution on Weibo. At first, I used Weibo's built-in search engine and the keyword 雾霾 (smog) to check the content that people posted. For each search, Weibo provides up to fifty pages of content. Each page contains around twenty posts. After seeing that many posts are about jogging when the air is polluted, I started using the keyword 雾霾跑步 (smog jog) to search for contents that are most related to jogging in smog. I also save some of the contents that I find most interesting and relevant in "my favorites" folder, which is a digital archiving function provided by Weibo. At the time of writing, I have saved 5,558 posts, 305 of which are about smog jog.

Not all of the posts include quantitative data. As Lupton (2016) explains, "Many self-trackers record nonquantifiable data as part of their practice; such data include journal accounts of their daily activities, emotional states, and relationships and collections of audio data and visual images" (28). Many of the posts include both textual and visual contents. And it should be noted that the visual images are often not generated by the same app, but produced by a combination of different apps or digital devices. The representation of images here mirrors the diverse ways in which images are shared and interpreted. Images are important for the analysis for the following reasons. First, many netizens find their own perception of air quality, visualized through photos, for example, more trustworthy than the official air quality index scores, due to the government's earlier denial of the air pollution problem. These images are often used to either provide evidence for the perceived air quality or to question the air quality index scores. Second, the images in these posts often make visible the elements of a jog that the Weibo users wish to highlight. They might supplement or contradict the

textual description. Last but not least, images are often used to evade censorship on social media, and to convey information that cannot be shared through texts.

I follow the sociomaterial "method" that does not put emphasis on what a method is, but what a method can do. That is, as Lupton (2018) writes, "analysis progresses from a set of questions that guide the analysis and a series of principles that acknowledge that any analysis will always be situated" (5). In other words, the aim to gain an insight into the multiple configurations of the relation between the self-tracking subject, health, and environment inform the ways in which the data is collected and analyzed. Instead of collecting a huge amount of data that maps out the determinants and motivations of sharing physical activity status updates on social media and social networking sites (see, for example, Stragier, Evens, and Mechant 2015), I closely read the posts and analyze the textual descriptions and visual images. I categorize these posts by adding one to two labels under each post in "my favorites." The function of labelling is also a built-in feature of Weibo. A maximum of two labels, twelve characters each, are allowed under each post. The labels that I have used include *negotiation* (130 posts), *other* (103 posts), *enjoyment* (23 posts), *noticing* (26 posts), *homejog* (17 posts), *app* (12 posts), *coronavirus* (9 posts). The data sampling is partial. Following Donna Haraway (1998), I understand such a partiality as a necessary limitation that is the condition of possibility of situated knowledge production.

Each label represents the main theme of the post. For example, posts labelled "negotiation" often include content about the challenges of jogging in smog. These negotiations are felt bodily and affectively, and are sometimes supplemented or complicated by images. In some cases, negotiation could also be about negotiation with authorities or with others' perceptions. By contrast, in posts marked by the label "enjoyment," air pollution might be less of a concern. Instead, smog contributes to the good feelings of jogging either in terms of the atmosphere/environment or in terms of a sense of belonging and identification. In the "noticing" category, smog is often just noticed as constitutive of the environment of the jog, without being explicitly marked as positive or negative. The label "other" is used for posts that include content that is not immediately related to self-tracking. The labels such as "homejog," "app," and "coronavirus" are used to highlight these elements that either mark a special interest in apps, or a form of economic affordance (the possibility of installing a treadmill at home), or an exceptional time period (in the case of the coronavirus pandemic).

These labels are not mutually exclusive, however. A lot of posts have two labels as they include different kinds of content. For example, a post can be labelled "negotiation" and "enjoyment," or contain textual descriptions that are relevant to one label and visual contents that concern another label. The three labels "homejog," "app," and "coronavirus" are always used in combination with another label. The analysis at hand focuses primarily on two categories: negotiation and enjoyment. This is not only because they are most relevant for the examination of the relation between self-tracking, health, and the environment, but also because they present seemingly opposing views on jogging in smog. As I will show in the following section, whereas in some cases negotiation and enjoyment represent different perceptions of air pollution—harmful abnormality versus normal weather condition—in other instances, they are much more intertwined processes. These ambiguities speak of the configuration of health in the postsocialist context and the complex relation between the individual subject and the nation state that I explained in the previous section.

Besides making visible the similarities among posts in each category as well as the major differences among the categories, I also pay close attention to internal intersections and contradictions within categories and posts. For example, I am interested in posts with two labels, and the ways in which the textual and visual descriptions within a post supplement each other, or have different implications. In what follows, I will not analyze every post, but only use a few as examples that are related to the questions raised in this article. But before proceeding to the analysis, I want to explain how I understand the ethics in collecting and using social media data. First, the posts that I collected are all public posts. Second, although the key ethical principles such as consent and anonymity are not clear-cut when using social media data (see, for example, Beninger 2017), I choose to anonymize the posts. Third, although I analyze the ways in which images and texts in a post might contradict or supplement each other, I only provide descriptions, rather than directly using these images. This is because I consider images to be much more personal and may easily provide information for identification.

Keeping Fit in Smog in Postsocialist China

Negotiation

While most of the posts in the negotiation category express struggles with jogging in smog, these negotiations take different forms. For example, some posts express struggles with the decision to jog in smog, as the following two posts show:

> Throw cautions to the wind. All for getting some sweat, I took my dog for a jog in the smog. There was no breeze, no sunshine, even leaves
>
> stopped swaying.There were only some tulip buds by the roadside…I finished 6.25 kilometers outdoor run @keep.[2]
>
> I did not jog yesterday because it was raining. Today the air quality index scores 200+. I feel uncomfortable if I do not jog. But if I do, I would be breathing toxic air. Eventually I decided to wear an air-filtering mask and jogged at a slower pace. 5+ pace. The mask helped. I jogged 12.58 kilometers using #YidongGPS. Time used 01:05:32, average speed 11:52 kilometers/hour, average pace 05′12″/kilometer, energy used: 843 kcal.[3]

Both posts are marked with "negotiation" and "app." The app used in the first post is called Keep. It is not hard to see that the last sentence of the post—"I finished 6.25 kilometers outdoor run @keep"—is automatically generated by Keep. Founded in China in 2014, Keep is one of the most popular fitness apps; it had more than 200 million members in 2019 (Daxueconsulting 2020). Members are typically encouraged to upload pictures and statistics of their physical activities on social media, which is understood to boost the user's online social capital and feeling of support and validation through likes and views, and to increase the app's visibility in the marketplace.

Feelings of validation and recognition— that one's effort is seen and supported by others—have become key components of fitness regime in recent years (see, for example, Lupton 2017a). It is important to note that although apps such as Keep are free to download and register, they mostly target the urban middle class who can invest time and money in keeping fit. To access their tailored programs and features, one needs to purchase a premium membership, which costs 9.99 Euros per month.

Both posts understand jogging in smog as a form of trade-off. In the first post, cautions about exercising in smog are "thrown to the wind" for the sake of getting sweaty. In the second post, the user was weighing the uncomfortable feeling caused by not jogging against the effect of breathing toxic air. Interestingly, what is considered to promote health and what is considered to threaten it are not so straightforward in these negotiations. For example, both breathing clean air and performing outdoor exercise such as jogging are seen to promote health. And both breathing polluted air and not jogging are understood to risk health. Instead

of considering health as a pre-existing state *of* the body, the negotiations and trade-offs exemplified in these two posts posit health in relational and emergent terms. In other words, instead of a physical state of the body that can be said to be more or less healthy according a set of predefined properties and traits, in these posts, health is conceived of as a contingent form of doing that is sensed and made intelligible through affective, numerical, and bodily registers.

For example, in the first post, the bodily sensation of getting a sweat is correlated with being active and healthy. In the second post, the sense of discomfort is measured against the risk of breathing toxic air, which is measured by the air quality index score of 200+. Although neither post explains explicitly what health is or how it is understood, how a jog, or the lack thereof, is experienced, health is used as the reference point against which the decision regarding whether going for a jog is made. Moreover, on both accounts, the doing of health is materialized in the "ecology of relations" (Liu 2018, 454)—a corporeography (Kirby 1997)—in which the numerical, affective, and bodily registers of health are measured against, through, and with each other.

In the second post, for example, numerical measurements for jogging (such as "5+ pace") and air quality ("air quality index 200+"), as well as the bodily sensation of wearing and breathing through a mask ("wearing a mask helped"), can be read in supplementary terms—each register explains through and differentiates from the other—through which the condition of the body is made intelligible. Whereas numerical measurements are utilized in the second post to specify the environment, visual and affective registers are underscored in the first one. As the user writes, "there was no breeze, no sunshine, even leaves stopped swaying. There were only some tulip buds by the roadside." The user depicts a somewhat dull, grey, and suffocating environment, the visual, embodied, and affective perceptions of which inform, speak of, and are shaped by the weighing between the risk of jogging in smog and not getting a good sweat. However, the tulip buds by the roadside also ends this post with a somewhat hopeful note, signaling the promise of health and vitality, as perhaps resonated with the sweaty sensation from a jog.

The calculative and agentic subject is also performatively materialized in the ecologies of relations. For example, in the second post, the user makes clear that jogging at 5+ pace—"a slower jog"— and wearing an air-filtering mask is a calculated decision in the face of the polluted air "air quality index 200+." Moreover, the post includes an image of a map of the jogging route generated by

the app. On the route, the app indicates where the jog started and finished as well as the places where the jogger's speed changed. The spatialization and quantification of the jog in relation to the air quality index generate a sense of risk/health that is calculated and hence controlled.
In some posts, the measurement of air quality provided by apps are not only used to track and record the environmental condition during the jog, but also to support calls on the government to tackle the air pollution problem. For example, in the following post, the user writes,

> Jogging for the 33rd day. I haven't jogged for 3 days. Smog, smog, still more smog! The air quality index scored 120 yesterday, I rushed to Ma'an mountain to get some fresh air. Today the wind was so strong that willow trees swayed and the leaves swirled. I was so glad as I thought this would mean that the weather would be great, and that it would be possible to see the blue sky and white clouds. I didn't expect that smog was even heavier today. Even the strong wind could not blow away smog. My great China, can you let me jog in peace? Give the blue sky back![4]

In this post, the user was surprised by the persistent and severe air pollution (even the strong wind could not blow away smog… smog, smog, still smog!). Here the severity of the air pollution problem is made visible through both textual descriptions and visual images. For example, the jogger includes a screenshot, presumably from a weather app, that details the weather conditions, including the temperature, strength of the wind, and the air quality index score ("279, severe"). There are four other images, which are photos taken with the mobile phone camera. One image shows the track covered by fallen leaves on which the jogging takes place. Another image shows the swaying willow tree branches. And the other two images show similar landscape covered by grey haze. There is also another image—a screenshot of the route of jog mapped by the app Hupu (虎扑), which shows the date, the distance of the jog and that it was the thirty-sixth time that the user has used Hupu to track a jog.

Unlike the two posts mentioned earlier, this post states how many times the user has been jogging, which seems to suggest that the user is cultivating the habit of jogging by using the mobile app. Whereas in the first post, the user negotiates the risk of smog jog by "throwing caution to the wind," and in the second post, the user utilizes strategies such as jogging at a slower pace and wearing an air-filtering mask, in this post the user calls on the government to "give the blue sky back." The user complains that the country/the government disturbs the jog ("My great China, can you let me jog in peace?"), by not tackling the problem of air

pollution. In contrast to the other two posts that configure health in terms of a trade-off and an individual responsibility, this post asserts the right to good air quality as a basic need, and extends the parameters that define health to include the health of the environment. In so doing, this post voices an explicit rejection of the framing of health as an individual responsibility, found in the guidance that residents should refrain from exercising outdoor when air is polluted, for example. The jogging body becomes a site of negotiation not only with air pollution but also the location of health and responsibility between the citizen and the state.

It is also important to note that both the first and the third posts underscore other aspects of the environment than the air quality during the jog, such as the relation between wind and tree branches. In the first post, the descriptions of the dull and lifeless environment and the hope and vitality that the tulip buds signify are the intertwined multisensory and affective registers through which the doing of health—as a form of trade-off in this case—is experienced and interpreted. In the third post, the textual and visual depiction of the environment function to support the claimed shocking severity of the persistent air pollution problem, as well as the call on the government to provide a safe and healthy environment for the livelihood of the people. In many ways, these posts could be said to exemplify the coexistence of the requirement of self-care and self-management, resulting from the privatization of healthcare since the beginning of 1980s, on the one hand, and the rising demand for the state to provide a good environment, understood as the condition of possibility for health as a basic need in China, which draws on the Chinese traditional and socialist ideology of the "service-oriented state" whose moral obligation is to improve the livelihoods of the people, on the other hand (see, for example, Tu 2019).

Enjoyment

In contrast to the posts labelled as "negotiation," some Weibo posts express enjoyment about jogging in smog, as the following post shows:

> The haze was very heavy in the morning. It was almost difficult to get a good sense of direction if it was not dawn. It is like in life. When a clear sense of direction is lost, one would struggle to find a goal despite countless beginnings, departures and starting overs. I met an older man on the jog back home. He asked why I jogged outside when the air was so polluted. I said this weather felt very comfortable. Just finding a start is great![5]

In this post, the details of the jog, such as its speed, duration, and distance, are

not explained in the textual description but in an image—a screenshot provided by an app. There are also three other images that capture the environment in which the jogging took place. Besides the heavy haze and the faint visibility that dominate the atmosphere of the three images, one thing that stands out for me is a signpost that celebrates the seventieth anniversary of the People's Republic of China. The red and yellow color of the signpost is in stark contrast to the grey haze.

The textual content of the post links the feeling of jogging in thick haze to living a disoriented life. However, the user isn't complaining about it. The dawn makes visible the direction. And the weather, according to the user, feels comfortable. In this post, the view that air pollution poses health risks, as asserted by the person the user encountered, is countered by the claim that such weather is comfortable. Here, smog is seen as a form of weather, and hence normal like all other weather events, rather than an exceptional phenomenon caused by air pollution. In this account, health is understood in affective terms, displaced from the physical status measured by the speed and duration of a jog to the feeling of being goal oriented in life. In other words, its point of reference shifts from bodily capacities to a centered subject who has a clear goal in life and is moving towards it. Jogging in smog is posited as a good starting point for reaching the goal. Although the user doesn't provide any explanation of the image of the celebration of the seventieth anniversary of the People's Republic of China, I read the visible difference between this image and the others as resonating with the feeling of orientation the user expresses. The bright red and yellow of the signpost seems to hint at the strong leadership of the state, which the user feels confident in and aligned with.

This sense of empowerment is also expressed in the following post:

> Today the smog is severe. I felt very heavy and depressed. At noon there was still no sign of the smog going away, so I put on the mask to protect myself and finished my scheduled run. I jogged 5 kilometers for over half an hour. This was the first time that I jogged wearing a mask. It did not feel great, but exhausting. During the last kilometer, I felt my chest tight due to the lack of oxygen. It was like walking on a plateau. But when I got to the end of the jog, I felt happy. The feeling of depression was gone. So, if we cannot change the environment, let's change ourselves.[6]

This post is marked by both "negotiation" and "enjoyment." In the first part of the post, the user negotiates the risk of jogging in smog by wearing a mask. Like the

posts discussed in the previous section, health here is configured as a trade-off. The user depicts this negotiation in bodily terms as the tightness of the chest and the unpleasant feeling of exhaustion. In the latter part, however, the user expresses a euphoric sense of accomplishment and empowerment, even if, and perhaps especially because, it is not possible to change the problem of air pollution. This sense of empowerment paradoxically results in the helpless and hopeless realization that it is not possible to change the environment, which stands in stark contrast to the post mentioned earlier in which the user voices the need for clean air as a basic need for health. As Tu (2019) notes, the performance of neoliberal subjectivity does not necessarily mean the improvement of individual rights in China, which is often reduced to self-care and the moral requirements with regard to self-responsibility that is oriented towards the common good (214).

While both these two posts express enjoyment, the second post does not neglect the health risks of smog, but considers practices of self-management ("finished my scheduled run") in the face of environmental adversities as an endeavor to promote health. Here, health is seen to result in and evince the persistence of the jogging body, whose struggle is felt through and as the difficulty in breathing. The post seems to suggest that it is only by enduring the suffering that is felt bodily and affectively that it is possible to improve the self. Interestingly, whereas the negotiation part of the post posits a boundary of the jogging body whose permeability is felt as the tight chest and exhausting breathing, in the latter part, the shift of the determining power from the environment to the subject re-establishes a sense of bodily boundary that separates the individual from the environment that is excessive and uncontrollable.

Conclusion

The analysis that I provide here, such as the categories of "negotiation" and "enjoyment" that I use to label the social media posts, does not suggest that everyone in China reacts to jogging, health, and air pollution in the same ways. Rather, the feminist sociomaterial method that I draw on foregrounds the necessary partiality of knowledge production. While not aiming to provide an exhaustive account of how health and smog jog are experienced and practiced in China (nor do I think such an account is possible), my analysis of the posts in terms of negotiations and enjoyments provide insights into the multiple and sometimes contradictory ways through which the question of health is understood, negotiated, and performed, as well as the ambivalent and complex relationship between the individual and the nation state in the postsocialist context.

As I have tried to show, in the case of smog jog, health is sensed and made sense of through, as, and in the human–atmospheric relations that are shaped by and situated in a specific intersection of issues such as socioeconomic inequalities, environmental pollution, the dynamics of social media platforms, and the sports boom in postsocialist China. More specifically, in the posts analyzed above, health is variously configured as a form of doing, as trade-offs between risks of breathing polluted air and the benefits of jogging, as an individual responsibility and capacity, as the goal-oriented subject, and as perseverance and the capacity to manage one's body in the face of environmental adversities. Or health is extended from the individual body to include environmental health, such as clean air, understood of as a basic need that should be provided by the state.

I utilize feminist materialist and feminist intersectional approaches to examine the intersection of social, political, environmental, economic issues, as well as the human–nonhuman, embodied, and affective aspects of the practice of smog jog. In line with this theoretical framework, I collect and analyze social media posts that include qualitative data such as non-numerical images and textual descriptions that may not seem immediately relevant to the practices of self-tracking. This method shifts the attention of the analysis away from the relation between the self-tracking subject, the health app, and the numerical data, and affords an account of the multiple ways through which smog jog is measured, felt, and understood. The theoretical and methodological approaches adopted in this article contribute to the scholarly field of self-tracking and digital health by reconfiguring questions of health and "healthy bodies." Instead of beginning from the self-present individual body as the basic unit of measurement, I make visible the ways in which health emerges through, in, and as human–atmospheric relations located in the context of postsocialist China. In so doing, I suggest new ways of posing questions about health, and argue for locating the analysis of self and self-tracking in specific relations of power.

Notes

[1] In this article, the notion of affect is used interchangeably with terms such as *feelings*, *sensations*, and *emotions*.

[2] This is my translation. The original post in Chinese reads, "豁出去了，为了出汗，在雾霾下带着狗狗跑步，没有微风，没有阳光，连熟知都停了摇拽，唯有路边郁金香蓓蕾。。。我在@Keep 完成了 6.52 公里的户外跑步. "

[3] This is my translation of the post . The original post in Chinese reads, "昨天早上下雨没跑，今早空气指数 200+，不跑吧蓝瘦，跑吧，吸毒，最后带上防霾口罩出门慢跑啦～～5+配速口罩还是管用的。我用#益动 GPS#跑步 12.58 公里，耗时 01:05:32， 平时时速 11.52 公里/小时，平均配速 05'12''/公里，消耗热能 843 大卡. " It is interesting to note that the user uses internet slang such as "蓝瘦" and "吸毒. " Whereas the former word has the same pronunciation as 难受, meaning uncomfortable, the latter term originally means taking drug; but, in recent years, it has become a common phrase used to mean "breathing smog."

[4] This is my translation. The original post in Chinese reads, "打卡第 33 天， 三天没跑步了，雾霾，雾霾，还是雾霾！昨天空气指数 120， 赶紧去马鞍山爬山换换空气。今天疾风刮杨柳左摇右摆，落叶满天飞，满心欢喜以为青天白日好天气了， 没想到啊雾霾反而更肆虐，大风都刮不走雾霾，我的大中国，你还能不能让我好好跑步了？还我蓝天！！"

[5] This is my translation of the original post. The original Chinese reads, "今天早上大雾茫茫，如果不是已经天亮，似乎已经找不到奔跑的方向。就像生活一样，有时候你迷失了方向，就会出现无数次的起点，无数次的出发，无数次的重新开始，找不到自己的目标。跑步回家的路上碰见一个大哥，他说这么大的雾霾天，还出来跑步，我说这天气多舒服呀。简单的出发就好！"

[6] This is my translation of the original post, which reads, "今天重度雾霾，心情郁闷。中午雾霾没有散去的迹象，只能戴上口罩，做好防护，完成计划中的跑步。 半个多小时，五公里，第一次戴口罩跑步。累，不爽。在最后一公里，感受到缺氧造成的胸闷，就像行走在高原。但到了终点却油然生出愉悦之情，郁闷全消。所以说，我们无力改变环境， 那就改变自己吧！"

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